

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A method for operating an internal combustion engine of a motor vehicle, the vehicle including an exhaust-gas recirculation via which exhaust gas is conveyed from an exhaust branch to an intake manifold in an activated state, the vehicle further including at least one actuating element in the exhaust branch, the method comprising:

determining, in at least one operating state of the engine, given an activated exhaust-gas recirculation, (a) a first intake-manifold pressure in a first position of the at least one actuating element in the exhaust branch and (b) a second intake-manifold pressure in a second position of the at least one actuating element in the exhaust branch; and

monitoring a function of the at least one actuating element in the exhaust branch as a function of a difference between the first and the second intake-manifold pressures.

2. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

detecting a malfunction of the at least one actuating element in the exhaust branch when an amount of the difference between the first and the second intake-manifold pressures falls below a predefined threshold value.

3. The method according to claim 2, wherein the predefined threshold value is selected as a function of a rotational speed of the engine.

4. The method according to claim 1, wherein the monitoring of the function of the at least one actuating element is implemented in an overrun operation of the engine.

5. The method according to claim 1, wherein the at least one actuating element includes a plurality of actuating elements, and wherein, in the monitoring of the plurality of actuating elements in the exhaust branch, the function of each one of the actuating elements is monitored and a position of at least one remaining actuating element is kept constant.

6. A device for operating an internal combustion engine of a motor vehicle, the vehicle including an exhaust-gas recirculation via which exhaust gas is conveyed from an exhaust branch to an intake manifold in an activated state, the vehicle further including at least one actuating element in the exhaust branch, the device comprising:

detection means for determining, in at least one operating state of the engine, given an activated exhaust-gas recirculation, (a) a first intake-manifold pressure in a first position of the at least one actuating element in the exhaust branch and (b) a second intake-manifold pressure in a second position of the at least one actuating element in the exhaust branch; and

means for monitoring a function of the at least one actuating element in the exhaust branch as a function of a difference between the first and the second intake-manifold pressures.